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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a summary of some key findings from a UNESCO survey undertaken to assess the scale and reach of media education throughout the world. In June 2001, a questionnaire was sent to 72 experts on media education in 52 countries worldwide. These individuals, who included academics, policymakers and educational advisers, had been identified by means of a review of existing print and Web-based contact lists. By mid-October 2001, 45 replies had been received from a total of 38 countries, representing approximately a two-thirds rate of return by country. In addition, the authors undertook an extensive review of print and Web-based materials relating to media education. The questionnaire addressed three key areas: media education in schools (the extent, aims and conceptual basis of current provision; the nature of assessment; and the role of production by students); partnerships (the involvement of media industries and media regulators in media education; the role of informal youth groups; the provision of teacher education); and the development of media education (research and evaluation of media education provision; the main needs of educators; obstacles to future development; and the potential contribution of UNESCO). On the basis of the analysis, this paper begins by offering some very broad generalizations about the overall state of development of media education. This is followed by a discussion of some of the more specific issues addressed in the questionnaire survey, and by a summary of the respondents' recommendations for future action in the field. (Contains 40 references.) (AEF)

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University of Southampton

Centre for Language in Education

Where Are We Going and How Can We Get There ?

General findings from the UNESCO Youth Media Education Survey 2001

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Centre for Language in Education: Occasional Paper No. 61

c/o Research & Graduate School of Education
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Where Are We Going and How Can We Get There?
General findings from the UNESCO Youth Media Education Survey 2001

INTRODUCTION

UNESCO has had a long history of support for media education, as part of its broader remit in the field of information and communication. Most recently, there have been moves to develop a range of new initiatives in the field of 'youth media education', including publications, expert meetings and policy debates. One early initiative here was the commissioning of an international survey, undertaken by the authors, to assess the scale and reach of media education around the world. This was by no means an extensive or comprehensive survey; although the responses we received do provide a telling indication of the current state of the field, and throw up some broader issues for debate. This paper presents a summary of some of the key findings. A much more detailed country-by-country analysis can be obtained from UNESCO.

In June 2001, a questionnaire was sent to a total of 72 experts on media education in 52 countries world-wide. These individuals, who included academics, policy-makers and educational advisers, had been identified by means of a review of existing print and web-based contact lists. In most cases, we contacted one individual in each country; and requested them, should they not be in a position to complete the questionnaire, to pass it on to a relevant colleague. In a few cases (mostly larger nations), we contacted two individuals. By mid-October 2001, at the point the report was compiled, we had received 45 replies from a total of 38 countries, representing approximately a two-thirds rate of return by country. Most of the replies received were extremely comprehensive. In addition, we undertook an extensive review of print and web-based materials relating to media education. We drew on a small number of international edited collections of work in the field, and accessed other resources via relevant websites. This material was combined with additional publications and documents sent to us by our survey respondents.

Our questionnaire addressed three key areas, as follows:

1. Media Education in Schools: the extent, aims and conceptual basis of current provision; the nature of assessment; and the role of production by students.

2. Partnerships: the involvement of media industries and media regulators in media education; the role of informal youth groups; the provision of teacher education.

3. The Development of Media Education: research and evaluation of media education provision; the main needs of educators; obstacles to future development; and the potential contribution of UNESCO.

On the basis of this research, we believe we have been able to develop a reasonably

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authoritative overview of the current state of development of media education around the world. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise several limitations to our study. Firstly, we should acknowledge that it is genuinely difficult to obtain a complete overview. Education systems in many countries are diverse and fragmented; and media education tends to appear in different curriculum locations in different countries. Secondly, there is obviously a limit in the extent to which we should rely on published sources, official documents, policy papers, and so on. These provide recommendations for classroom practice, or representations of it; but they do not necessarily correspond to what is happening 'on the ground'. One of our key findings is that there is an extraordinary dearth of systematic, reliable research in this field; and as such, the responses and material we have gathered are bound to be partial and impressionistic. Thirdly, there is a risk that derives from the tentative and still somewhat 'pioneering' status of media education. We suspect that advocates of media education may be inclined to 'talk up' or exaggerate the extent of what is taking place, in the understandable hope that this will help to promote it. This should encourage us to take a somewhat cautious approach to some of the claims that are made.

One final caveat is worth noting here. Our research focused primarily on media education in *schools*. This does not at all imply a lack of interest in other potential sites of media education. Indeed, we suspect that in several countries (such as the USA or parts of Latin America) the most interesting and productive work is happening outside the formal education system, in the context of local youth and community-based projects. We included a question about this in our survey; and yet it was quite striking that many of our respondents (who were mainly based in formal education) did not seem to know of any such work taking place. This may reflect the fact that basic information about such 'informal' media education initiatives has not yet been gathered or circulated, not least because this is such a decentralised and diverse field. However, it may also reflect a lack of connection between 'formal' and 'informal' media education of this kind.

On the basis of our analysis, this article begins by offering some very broad generalisations about the overall state of development of media education. This is followed by a discussion of some of the more specific issues addressed in our questionnaire survey; and by a summary of the respondents' recommendations for future action in the field. We welcome responses to this paper, which would be of great assistance to UNESCO in developing its work.

OVERALL FINDINGS

In many countries around the world, the past two decades have seen extensive and far-reaching changes in educational policy and practice. Despite this general climate of change, however, it would seem that media education has made very uneven progress. In many cases, one can see bursts of innovative activity that have not ultimately been sustained; while in others, potential advances on the level of national policy have subsequently been overturned. Some countries (such as Hungary and New Zealand) currently seem to be riding on the crest of a media education wave; although in others

(such as Japan and South Africa) there is considerable frustration about the failure of policy-makers to address media education in any coherent way. In many developing countries, where educators are largely preoccupied with developing basic print literacy, media education is only just beginning to register as a concern, while in the countries where media education is most firmly established in the curriculum (such as Canada and England), there are signs of weariness among its most prominent advocates.

Where media education exists at all as a defined area of study, it tends to take the form of an elective or optional area of the secondary school curriculum, rather than a compulsory element. There is very little evidence internationally of systematic or extensive media education provision for younger children (under the age of 11). In many countries, there is considerable uncertainty about whether media education should be regarded as a separate curriculum subject, or integrated within existing subjects. It appears most frequently as a 'pervading' element of the curriculum for mother-tongue language or social studies (or its equivalent). In this context, however, it is often loosely defined, and is rarely assessed as such: in the words of our Scottish respondent, it is 'everywhere and nowhere'. Media education is also sometimes confused with educational media - that is, with the use of media technology for educational purposes. In these contexts, media education often appears to be regarded as a means rather than an end in itself. Only in a few countries does media education form a substantial, assessed part of the mother-tongue language curriculum (e.g. Canada, New Zealand, Australia) or a separate examined course (e.g. England).

In this situation, the development of media education frequently depends upon the initiative of committed teachers, often working in isolation. The most urgent need identified in our survey is for sustained, in-depth teacher training, both at initial and in-service levels. Even in countries where media education is comparatively well-established, there are very few opportunities for training, and only a minority of teachers are reached by it. Meanwhile, arguments for media education have generally met with indifference or even resistance from policy-makers: many of our respondents suggested that media education was not really on the policy agenda in any form. As a result, media education suffers from a lack of funding, and a lack of recognition (for example, by universities); and particularly in poorer countries (though not only there), the efforts of teachers are hampered by a lack of basic equipment and resources. In general, there has been little sustained support for media education initiatives from the media industries or from regulatory authorities; and with a few exceptions (e.g. Russia, England, Sweden), there has been an absence of basic research, particularly into questions about students' learning and about the effectiveness of media education programmes.

There are many reasons for this relative lack of progress, although a full discussion of these would take us beyond our brief here. Among those cited by our respondents are the relative - and in some instances increasing - conservatism of education systems; the continuing resistance to regarding popular culture as worthy of study; and the potentially threatening nature of the kinds of 'critical thinking' which are inherent to media education. These are all well-documented in the media education literature.

The comparison with the rapid diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education was also made by many respondents. Some argued that the massive injection of funding in this area offered considerable potential for developing creative work with media in schools (e.g. China, Hong Kong, Canada). In other contexts, however, the drive towards ICTs was seen to be undermining arguments for media education: in Japan, for example, the use of ICTs in education was seen primarily as a quick way of raising a 'tech-savvy' workforce; while in Denmark ICTs are largely the preserve of computer educators, rather than being addressed within a critical media education framework. However, several respondents suggested that this situation was likely to change over the longer term. They argued that the naive optimism about the power of technology that currently characterises the debate around ICTs would eventually give way to a more critical, questioning approach; and when this happened, media education was likely to have a great deal to offer.

Despite this rather bleak picture, our survey also suggests several grounds for optimism. Many of the questionnaire responses and much of the material we have reviewed display a high degree of commitment, and a lucid sense of the aims and objectives of media education. In many countries, media education is informed by a rigorous and systematic conceptual framework that is clearly reflected in teaching materials, syllabus documents and the like. In general, there is a good deal of consensus among our respondents (and, by extension, among those active in the field) about the aims and characteristics of media education - even if this is not yet recognised by policy-makers or by the educational world in general.

In a number of contexts, teachers have formed supportive networks and associations that encourage the exchange of good practice, and the development of dialogue and debate on the future of the field. Many such associations publish newsletters or journals, and some sustain extensive websites (e.g. Australia). In some countries, there are well-established partnerships with media producers and regulators, and successful instances of peer-training (e.g. New Zealand, Australia, the work of the CBFA in South Africa). Even in countries where media education is less well developed, there have been productive relations with broadcasters (e.g. Hong Kong); and publishing companies have been willing to publish textbooks and classroom resources (e.g. China, Japan, Malta).

It is both a source of strength and a mark of optimism that teachers are continuing to argue the case for media education in relatively difficult circumstances. In recent years, significant gains have been made in countries like Russia and Hungary that have seen the establishment of formal curricula in media education, due in no small part to the continuous campaigning of local teachers and practitioners. Despite the fact that many media educators are working in isolation, they are occasionally very effective in making their voices heard. They are also increasingly keen to engage in international dialogue, and to share approaches and resources. As a result, it is very clear what media educators need if the field is to expand and develop. These needs are addressed in the concluding section of this article.

KEY ISSUES

AIMS OF MEDIA EDUCATION

Historically, media education has tended to move away from an approach based on 'inoculation' towards one based on 'empowerment'. These are admittedly loose terms, but they were recognised and used by many of our respondents. The notion that media education should aim to defend or protect young people against media influence seems to have lost ground in recent years. Even where our respondents recognised that this approach was still prevalent in their own countries (e.g. Hong Kong, USA), they tended to reject it or suggest that it needed to be superseded. The more contemporary definition of media education seems to be based on notions such as 'critical awareness', 'democratic participation' and even 'enjoyment' of the media. This emergent approach also affords a more prominent role for media production by students. In Spain, for example, media education is argued for in terms of students becoming 'critical citizens' and gaining opportunities to become part of a 'media community'. In Denmark it is seen as necessary 'in order to empower students as strong individuals in a democracy'; while in Sweden students engage in media education in order to help them in 'expressing themselves, their knowledge and their feelings'.

In several countries, the term 'media literacy' is used more widely than 'media education'. This reference to literacy is partly strategic, since it offers a basis for including media alongside print in the established mother-tongue language curriculum. This is where media education is most frequently to be found, even in countries where it is very well-established (e.g. Australia, Canada, England). However, this use of the term 'literacy' also reflects a broader argument about the changing needs of learners in a media-saturated world. Several of our respondents insisted on the need for a broader conception of 'literacy' if education is to address contemporary realities (e.g. Japan). It is vital to emphasise here, however, that this notion of 'literacy' is not a functional or instrumental one: for nearly all our respondents, media literacy was very clearly defined as a form of *critical* literacy.

Several respondents also maintained that media education necessarily entails a more 'active', 'student-centred', 'participatory' pedagogy. Media education was, it was argued, a matter of 'learning by doing'; and it was an area in which teachers needed to recognise the considerable knowledge and expertise of their students. This was particularly the case in relation to students' engagement in practical media production, but it was frequently seen as a more general requirement. Here again, media education may be at odds with the predominantly conservative ethos of most education systems.

Of course, the history of media education is bound to be inflected by local and national contexts and concerns, and should not be completely subsumed under this 'grand narrative'. For example, the responses and material submitted from Ireland and Russia offered useful histories which point to the diverse origins and traditions of media education in those countries. Different aims and approaches often exist side-by-side, with little attempt to bring them together. Indeed, given the relative novelty of media

education in many contexts, it could be seen as distinctly counter-productive to seek to impose a singular model. A couple of our respondents criticised the prevailing tendency to look to models from 'Western' (or specifically English-speaking) countries.

Generally speaking, however, countries with a less well-established tradition of media education still seem to be informed by a perceived need to 'protect' young people from the media. For example, this aim is clearly apparent in the work reported by UNDA (the International Catholic Association for Radio and Television) which was one of the few sources we were able to locate relating to Africa. Here, the aim of media education is to save young children from 'unsuitable material'; or, in a more directly political vein, to ensure that they recognise the differences between imported culture and 'authentic' culture. However, these motivations are by no means confined to developing countries. The responses from the USA, for example, reflect the continuing influence there of an 'inoculative' approach in relation to issues such as media violence, drugs and sex.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

If most practitioners are clear about the broad aims of media education, the extent to which these are translated into classroom practice is highly variable. Many countries have generalised policy statements from central government agencies, which require media education to be delivered as part of mother-tongue language teaching or in social studies (or related areas like political education or citizenship). However, this rhetorical certainty is often undermined by the lack of any follow-up strategy in the form of clearly assessed activities or models of student progression in skills and competencies (see below). These different locations for media education obviously have implications in terms of how its aims are defined. Media education often seems to be used as a pretext for work on language or social issues, and to be assessed in these terms; and as a result, aims specific to media education tend to be marginalised. In more decentralised education systems (e.g. India, China, USA), there are often significant discrepancies between the aims of central government and those of local educators.

A clearly defined conceptual framework for the curriculum is obviously necessary, both in order to ensure that teachers and students are aware of the specific aims of the classroom activities they undertake, and in order to provide an agreed basis for assessment. Some of our questionnaire responses identified frameworks that are primarily defined in terms of skills or competencies, or in terms of content; while others suggested that no clear framework exists. However, many countries do now possess an explicit conceptual framework for the media education curriculum; and many respondents suggested that such a conceptual framework was necessary even if it was not already in place.

The frameworks developed by the Association for Media Literacy in Canada and the British Film Institute in England (which are closely related) have been very influential internationally, even in very different cultural contexts. Most countries that have an explicit framework use some variant of these, while some appear to have adopted one or

other of them wholesale (in some cases via the translation of relevant textbooks). Broadly speaking, there are four key areas that emerge as the common conceptual concerns of media education, although they are often described or labelled in different ways. They can be grouped as follows:

1. Language: media aesthetics - media as constructions - realism - narrative - conventions and genres (these issues are often addressed through student production)

2. Representation: media messages and values - 'media and society' - stereotyping - selection and point of view

3. Production: media industries/organisations/institutions - economics - professional practice

4. Audience: personal response and involvement in media - consciousness of own media use - the role of media in identity

Among these, different areas tend to be prioritised in different contexts, not least as a result of the location of media education in the curriculum. Thus, while issues of 'representation' are fairly consistently addressed across the board, 'language' tends to be emphasised in the context of mother tongue language teaching, while 'production' often features more strongly in the context of social studies or citizenship education. With few exceptions (e g England, Canada, Australia), the area of 'audience' tends to be addressed through personal reflection on the part of individual students, rather than analysis of social differences among media audiences.

Some respondents were concerned about the dominance of what they regarded as 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Western' models, and expressed the need to develop conceptual frameworks that were more appropriate to their educational and cultural contexts. In the absence of support and resources to undertake this work, however, it is likely that these conceptual models will continue to be the most influential.

LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Predictably, only countries with the most developed media education curricula have clear specifications of the skills and competencies that are expected at different levels, and of how they are to be assessed. For example, these are very clearly defined in New Zealand's new technical and vocational curriculum in media, and in the new Hungarian curriculum. Respondents identified several overarching difficulties as regards assessment. In many instances, it seems that media education is included in curriculum documents, but is not separately assessed in its own right (or indeed assessed at all). As noted above, media work is frequently treated as a means to other ends (developing skills in written or spoken language, for example), in which case it tends to be assessed in these terms. Assessment frequently privileges written communication at the expense of other modes addressed in media education; and this seems to reflect a more general confusion about

how 'media literacy' is to be defined in the first place. As a result, there is very little systematic attention to the question of learning progression.

In several instances, the difficulties of assessment have resulted in considerable frustration. In Chile, for example, the curriculum documents indicate that students should develop critical awareness and actively participate in creating media texts with a clear message; yet there are no defined criteria by which these skills are to be assessed. On the other hand, some respondents appeared to enjoy the freedom that came from a lack of such specification. In the language curriculum in New Zealand, for example, a lack of prescription was seen to allow for considerable flexibility on the part of teachers; while in Uruguay it has meant that media education can be an entirely creative venture, rather than having to be defined in terms of specific theoretical aims.

Some of this optimism derives from an understandable wish to savour what is possible, rather than continually balking at what seems difficult to achieve. In general, however, there is no doubt that the absence of structured assessment procedures has contributed to the lack of status afforded to media education. The fact that media education has largely been subsumed within the assessment procedures of other subject areas has left it continuously struggling for recognition in its own right. One can argue that assessment exerts a much more determining influence on classroom practice than any curriculum document, and as such should be prioritised. Yet even when the criteria for assessment are explicit, the resources and training that teachers require to implement it may still be lacking. 'Statements of intent' are clearly important, but they are not sufficient in themselves to bring about fundamental changes in practice.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

In many countries (with the interesting exception of some Latin American countries), media education is primarily defined as a 'critical' enterprise. Practical production by students is growing in importance, partly as a result of the dissemination of ICTs, but it still remains marginal in the large majority of cases, particularly where funding is limited. Even so, many of our respondents emphasised the need to integrate 'theory' and 'practice': while they recognised that students were highly motivated towards production activities, they also stressed the need for reflection rather than creative production for its own sake. The latter was seen to be a particular danger with the spread of ICTs, where there is a risk of encouraging a purely 'technical' emphasis on production, which is lacking in critical thinking or questioning.

Nevertheless, in some contexts (e.g. USA, Hong Kong, Canada), the separation between theory and practice was not always seen as negative; and several respondents were quite happy to encourage creative media production as a valid activity in its own right. Likewise, whilst the drive towards ICTs appears to prioritise technical competence with new technology, some educators did not see this as necessarily incompatible with the kinds of practical or creative tasks that were undertaken in a media education context. As we have noted above, some argued that the 'wiring up' of schools could usher in far

greater prospects for media education at a later date, even if it did not appear to do so immediately. They argued that students would need some kind of critical competence in using ICTs (for example, in evaluating information encountered on the Web); and that enabling them to 'cope' with the new technology might eventually accelerate attempts to establish a more formal media education curriculum.

In some situations, the spread of ICTs, together with partnership projects with newspapers and TV stations, has led to a growing emphasis on the vocational (or pre-vocational) aspects of media education. This may well be a consequence of media education needing to account for itself in a new educational context characterised by a strong emphasis on technical skills and competence. In others, however, these developments have merely highlighted the division of skills in media teaching and learning. As one respondent put it, 'students have the technical know-how, but not the critical sense - with teachers it is exactly the opposite'. And despite gaining greater access to computers, even in industrialised countries schools are often woefully short of other kinds of equipment, such as television sets.

Ultimately, it is possible that the advent of ICTs will reconfigure the relationship between theory and practice in media education; and that it may result in a broader re-definition of the subject field. On the other hand, media education may well have a great deal to contribute to the development of critical educational thinking in relation to ICTs. There is a potential for dialogue here which seems, at least at present, to be largely unfulfilled.

PARTNERSHIPS

In principle, respondents accepted that partnerships of various kinds were a necessity for the future development of media education. However, their past experience of such partnerships was uneven.

With a few exceptions (e.g. Japan, Canada, New Zealand), there was very little evidence of regulatory bodies being interested or involved in media education, even though some were inclined to express support in principle. In terms of the involvement of media producers, there was considerable variation. In many instances, respondents reported that media companies were indifferent or even hostile towards media education; and in some cases, this was not confined to commercial companies, but extended to public service broadcasters also. On the positive side, several countries have 'Newspapers in Education' schemes; and elsewhere, there are projects in which children work alongside television or film producers. The Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) sponsor annual awards which acknowledge a strong and growing relationship between media providers and media educators. Positive partnerships of this kind offer clear gains in terms of providing access to knowledge about institutional practices and arrangements; in terms of sharing expertise and resources; and (in some instances) in terms of providing vocational advice. As most countries appear to be leaving behind the 'protectionist' approach to media education, the time is ripe for greater collaboration.

In poorer countries with a shorter history of media education, or with less interest from policy makers, the development of media education absolutely relies on such partnerships, as is the case with production-based projects in China and Hong Kong. In some instances, they are necessary simply in order to ensure the provision of basic resources (e.g. Mozambique).

However, several respondents expressed some scepticism about the value of such initiatives, and others pointed to the dangers of blurring corporate and educational objectives. These arguments clearly relate to broader concerns about the growth of commercial involvement in schooling. Some respondents argued that such partnerships should not be seen merely as a form of public relations for media companies, and that educational aims should be more strongly emphasised. By contrast, one of our Canadian respondents offered an extremely upbeat estimation of the value of such partnerships, which reflected few of these concerns.

One issue that was raised by several respondents here was that of copyright. While laws on this matter vary significantly, in some countries the work of media educators is significantly constrained by the unwillingness of companies and governments to waive copyright restrictions on educational use.

TRAINING

The lack of appropriate training for teachers of media education was an almost universal complaint amongst respondents. The absence of a centrally organised strategy meant that teachers were either training themselves or being trained in very *ad hoc* ways. At best, respondents were able to cite a few examples of university-level courses in their country, but the numbers of teachers being trained in this way were considerably short of the numbers required. It was frequently reported that centralised resources were being spent on ICT training, and that this was superseding any systematic attempt to educate teachers specifically for media teaching.

A high proportion of teachers of specialist media courses have no training beyond a few professional development days. A notable exception would be in Western Australia, where teachers must have a degree in the field and a postgraduate diploma in education and where only trained media studies teachers are appointed to teach the subject. More commonly reported was the case in South Africa, where specialist teacher training for media education is negligible. As in other contexts, teachers of media tend to possess literature degrees and extrapolate their media teaching from their experience with working with texts in literature. This is not only inadequate but often leaves teachers ill-equipped to deal with the more sociological or practical dimensions of media education that most countries believe are important.

Even where media education is firmly established in the formal school sector, there is frequently a lack of specialist training for teachers. In Canada, after fifteen years of concerted lobbying, media education is now a mandated part of the curriculum. Yet the

fact that there is almost no training means that it is very difficult to put the mandate into practice. In some European contexts (e.g. Denmark, England, Scotland), specialist media courses are now developing in schools. Yet this development has not been met with an increase in specialist teacher training. In England, there is only one specialist course in initial teacher training (for Media with English), with places for a few students each year. Given that more than 50,000 students follow specialist media courses between 14 and 18, the level of teacher training is very far from adequate to meet the demand for specialist teachers. There are Masters degrees and a number of distance learning diplomas available, but even this is not in line with the level of expansion in schools. In Greece, a new Media Literacy course designed for Second Opportunity Schools (a continuing education initiative) demands that teachers have initial training in journalism or communication studies and be required to undergo a specialist training programme intended to prepare them in the specific aims, content and pedagogical methods of media education. Yet initiatives like this are the exception. In general, teachers of media tend to have little or no formal training and find it hard to gain access to in-service training or further professional development.

This lack of training is being redressed in all kinds of ways. The world-wide growth of courses in media and communications at undergraduate level means that some teachers will now enter media teaching with a specialist background. There are a few examples of postgraduate courses (e.g. USA) or distance learning (e.g. Spain, England) being established to support the professional development of media teachers. But most often training is provided by less formal organisations and without substantial support from a centralised source. In some instances, training is provided by networks of teachers themselves: in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, for example, there are lively specialist subject associations which produce resources, run conferences and maintain dialogue among practising teachers via newsletters or journals. The dearth of training in other contexts has been addressed through a range of publishing initiatives: in Japan, China and Hong Kong, for example, commercial publishers have begun to address the lack of resources and training teachers face. One of the most repeated concerns here was that future training should focus on ways of applying media education principles to the new technologies, in order to counter the instrumental and uncritical approach that is seen to dominate much ICT training.

NEEDS AND OBSTACLES

Our respondents all recognised the importance of formal recognition at government level of the importance of media education as a key entitlement for all students. Most reported that their government pays some lip-service to the ways in which students need to be equipped to cope with life in a multi-media world. But many fewer respondents were able to cite government mandates which specify where in the curriculum and how specifically this might take place.

As we have noted, the most commonly expressed need was for specialist teacher training, and specifically for media education to be implanted in the first phase of teacher

education. Continuous training is necessary to upgrade skills and practices, and to support the ongoing exchange of resources and strategies. In some poorer countries (such as India), the general infrastructure for training teachers is in need of a radical injection of cash in order to improve resources (for example, access to specialist publications and research). By contrast, in Japan it was argued that government's focus on technology had brought about a shift from a critical pedagogy to a training agenda; and in this context, a more 'low-tech' approach to media literacy work might be appropriate. In most countries, however, there is still comparatively little digital technology in schools, and this hinders the development of more practical approaches to media education.

One of the main needs expressed by many respondents was for an authoritative definition of the aims and conceptual basis of media education. While practitioners are generally very clear on these points, they have been less successful in communicating their ideas to politicians; and as a result, politicians tend to view media education with suspicion, or at least with indifference. Even in contexts where media education has quite a strong and established place in the curriculum, the lack of clarity regarding assessment often reduces it to a marginal subject that can be sprinkled across other subject areas and provided for without any specialist training. Most damning of all is that in a country like Australia, with quite a well established media education history, qualifications in media education are not counted for university entry. The low status of the subject continues to make it difficult to argue for change, leaving educators in a position of lobbying for an area that has no formal recognition.

The absence of research was also registered as an obstacle. Most education systems that are centrally organised or that have centralised assessment tend to be innately conservative in their provision. Rigorous, academic research about the value and effectiveness of media education is necessary if governments are to be persuaded to change policy. Acting internationally would help local providers to draw on successful examples from other contexts, adding to the weight of the lobby for media education locally. Although such research has been undertaken in some contexts, it needs to be more effectively disseminated.

WHERE TO NEXT?

In summary, our survey identified a range of needs on the part of media educators, which might usefully be addressed both by national governments and by international agencies such as UNESCO. In the case of the latter, the following were identified as key areas, in a rough order of priority:

1. Training. The lack of training was identified by very many respondents as the main obstacle to future development. It was suggested that international agencies like UNESCO could provide training (via distance learning) as well as offering resources and support for local training initiatives.

2. Resources. Here it was suggested that international agencies should play a role in

enabling educators to share resources, and in supporting those who could adapt and translate resources for different national contexts. A website was seen as a key first step towards achieving this; and there was support for the establishment of an international 'Clearing House' in the field.

3. Lobbying. Many respondents expressed the view that authoritative statements about media education from a body such as UNESCO would assist their attempts to argue the case with national policy-makers. Past or existing statements of this nature could also be more widely distributed.

4. Research. It was argued that agencies such as UNESCO should facilitate the sharing and dissemination of existing research as well as supporting new research initiatives, both local and comparative.

In developing the above initiatives, respondents pointed to a number of concerns that would need to be addressed:

1. Media and ICT. While many respondents welcomed the possibilities of digital media, most argued that media education should encompass the full range of media; and they sought to distinguish their own position from what they saw as the uncritical euphoria surrounding ICTs in education.

2. A global perspective. Several respondents felt that there needed to be a genuine international dialogue about the full range of approaches to media education, rather than one dominated by English-speaking countries. Any initiatives in this field would need to address the issue of translation; and, in the case of conferences or international meetings, provide funding to ensure attendance from developing countries.

3. Copyright. Laws on intellectual property vary a great deal internationally, but in several countries copyright poses significant restrictions on the work of media educators. This issue might be addressed via international legal authorities.

4. Informal and formal media education. As noted in our introduction, there is a need to pull together information about 'informal' media education (which would require a different approach from that adopted in this survey), and to develop connections between this work and that being undertaken in schools.

We anticipate that these initiatives will be taken forward over the coming months, and we look forward to receiving responses and expressions of interest.

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